

Explanation of The Book of Tawheed

Class Notes – Chapter 25

بَابُ بَيَانِ شَيْءٍ مِنْ أَنْوَاعِ السِّحْرِ

Identifying some forms of sihr (magic/sorcery).

- **Relevance of the chapter to the book:** In the previous chapter the author outlined the ruling of *sihr*. In this chapter he elaborates on some of its forms. Such forms are widely practiced, and their causes are hidden from the people, to the extent that they are mistakenly believed to be miracles produced by supposed righteous people. This led these ignorant people to worship the practitioners of *sihr* besides *Allah*, thus falling into major *shirk*.
- (السِّحْرِ) – “*Magic/sorcery*”. Unlike the previous chapter which defined and classified *sihr* according to its definition in the *sharee’ah*, this chapter is broader and includes the types of *sihr* which also fall under its linguistic definition.

قَالَ أَحْمَدُ: حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ حَدَّثَنَا عَوْفٌ عَنْ حَيَّانَ بْنِ الْعَلَاءِ حَدَّثَنَا قَطْنُ بْنُ قَبِيصَةَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ أَنَّهُ

سَمِعَ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ قَالَ: إِنَّ الْعِيَافَةَ وَالطَّرْقَ وَالطَّيْرَةَ مِنَ الْجِبْتِ.

قَالَ عَوْفٌ: الْعِيَافَةُ: زَجْرُ الطَّيْرِ، وَالطَّرْقُ: الْخَطُّ يُحْطُّ فِي الْأَرْضِ،

وَالجِبْتِ: قَالَ الْحَسَنُ: رَنَّةُ الشَّيْطَانِ. إِسْنَادُهُ جَيِّدٌ.

وَلِأَبِي دَاوُدَ وَالنَّسَائِي وَابْنِ حَبَّانَ فِي صَحِيحِهِ التَّمْسَنُ مِنْهُ.

Imam Ahmad reported: Muhammad bin Ja'far narrated from Auf, from Haiyan bin al- Alaa, from Qatan bin Qabisah, from his father that he heard the Prophet ﷺ say: Verily, al-'Iyafah and al-Tarq and al-Tiyarah are al-Jibt (sorcery/magic).

Auf said: al-'Iyafah is letting a bird's flight foretell events while al-Tarq is drawing lines on earth.

al-Hasan al-Basri said: al-Jibt is the sound of the Shaytaan.

The above hadith has been narrated through a good chain of narrators and collected by Abu Dawud, al-Nasa'i and Ibn Hibban.

- (عَنْ أَبِيهِ) – “*On the authority of his father*”. Referring to the father of Qatan bin Qabisah who was Qabisah ibn al-Mukhariq, a renowned *sahabi*.
- (قَالَ أَحْمَدُ) – “*Imam Ahmad reported*”. That is, the *hadith* is narrated in his Musnad. The author also mentioned that the *hadith* is narrated by Abu Dawud, al-Nasaai and Ibn Hibaan.
- (الْعِيَافَةَ) – As explained by Auf (one of the narrators of the *hadith*), it is to release the birds as a means of determining affairs. The pagan Arabs had a method of doing this. If after being released the bird flew to the left, they would be pessimistic about a particular affair and would not proceed with it. If on the other hand it flew to the right, they would be optimistic and proceed with the matter. If it went forward, they would be undecided and may have repeated the process.

- (وَالطَّرِيقَ) – Again, as explained by Auf, it is to draw lines in the sand to foretell events. It is referred to as geomancy in English. It is derived from the word *tareeq* meaning path. That is, they would draw paths in the sand, purportedly as a means of fortune telling and sorcery. Its principles are unknown except to its practitioners.
- (وَالظَّيْرَةَ) – To consider something seen or heard as a bad omen, whether it is in the past or in the present. The pagan Arabs would consider certain times, places or people as bad omens that supposedly bring about bad luck.
- (مِنَ الْجِبْتِ) – “Is from al-Jibt”. In the previous chapter it was mentioned that Umar interpreted *jibt* to mean *sihr*. Therefore, it is as if the *hadith* is implying that *al-Iyaafa*, *al-Tarq* and *al-Tiyara* are all forms of *sihr*.

As for the interpretation of al-Hassan al-Basri that it is the sound of the Shaytaan, then this has been interpreted as meaning the revelation of the Shaytaan. The one who follows the revelation of the Shaytaan, has no doubt committed disbelief. In some narrations it simply mentions that it is the Shaytaan, without any reference to the sound.

- **General meaning of the hadith:** The Prophet ﷺ informs us that *al-Iyaafa*, *al-Tarq* and *al-Tiyara* are all forms of *sihr*. *al-Iyaafa* and *al-Tiyara* are considered to be a form of *sihr*, because they are based on that which has no reality and is hidden. This is as per the linguistic definition of *sihr* (every effect whose cause or origin is subtle or hidden). *al-Tarq* is considered to be a form of *sihr* because it is specifically used in the practice of fortune-telling and magic.
- **Relevance of the hadith to the chapter:** The *hadith* affirms that determining affairs by releasing birds, foretelling events by drawing lines in the sand and believing in bad omens are manifestations of sorcery which contradicts the concept of pure *tawheed* in Islam.

وَعَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: مَنْ اقْتَبَسَ شُعْبَةً مِنَ النُّجُومِ فَقَدْ اقْتَبَسَ شُعْبَةً مِنَ السِّحْرِ زَادَ مَا زَادَ. رواه أبو داود، وإسناده صحيح.

Ibn Abbas narrated that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: Whoever learns a part of astrology (drawing knowledge from stars) has learned a part of sorcery. Those who learn more are getting that much more (sin to their credit). [Abu Dawud – Sahih]

- (مَنْ اقْتَبَسَ) – “Whoever learns”. The word *qabas* literally means a firebrand. That is, the one who learns astrology is like the one who acquires a firebrand in terms of its harm upon them.
- (شُعْبَةً) – “A part”. They do not have to learn all of it in order for the ruling to be applied, rather just learning some of it is considered as *sihr*.
- (النُّجُومِ) – “Astrology”. Literally, it means stars, however what is forbidden is using the stars to foretell events on the earth. As for the scientific study of the stars (astronomy), it is not included in the prohibition.
- (زَادَ مَا زَادَ) – “Those who learn more are getting that much more”. That is, the more they acquire such knowledge, the more branches of sorcery they acquire and subsequently the more sins they acquire.
- **General meaning of the hadith:** The Prophet ﷺ explicitly warns that whoever gains knowledge of any branch of astrology incurs the same sin of learning a branch of sorcery. The more they gain the knowledge of astrology, the more they are acquainted with sorcery, because astrology is an act of foretelling the future which is only known by Allah.
- **Relevance of the hadith to the chapter:** The Prophet ﷺ clearly states that astrology is a type of sorcery. This is as per its linguistic definition in that it relies on hidden meanings that are baseless.

وَلِلنَّسَائِي مِنْ حَدِيثِ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ: مَنْ عَقَدَ عُقْدَةً ثُمَّ نَفَثَ فِيهَا فَقَدْ سَحَرَ وَمَنْ سَحَرَ فَقَدْ أَشْرَكَ وَمَنْ تَعَلَّقَ شَيْئًا وَكَلَّ إِلَيْهِ.

And from the hadith of Abu Hurairah: Whoever ties a knot and blows on it has committed sorcery and whoever commits sorcery has committed shirk. Whoever wears an amulet or talisman will be subjected to its control. [al-Nasa'i – da'eef]

- **Takhreej:** As mentioned by the author, this *hadith* was narrated by al-Nasa'i in his Sunan, however the narration is weak (*da'eef*). Some scholars have mentioned, that if all the weak narrations of this *hadith* are considered, then it can be elevated to the level of *hassan*. And Allah knows best.
- (مَنْ عَقَدَ عُقْدَةً) – “Whoever ties a knot”. Such as what the practitioners of witchcraft do.
- (ثُمَّ نَفَثَ فِيهَا) – “Then blows in it”. *al-Nafth* is the blowing of air from the mouth that is also accompanied by droplets of spit. As Allah says:

﴿وَمِنْ شَرِّ التَّقَاتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ﴾

And from the evil of the blowers in knots. [al-Falaq: 4]

- (فَقَدْ سَحَرَ) – “They have committed sorcery”. The forbidden sorcery.
- (وَمَنْ سَحَرَ فَقَدْ أَشْرَكَ) – “Whoever commits sorcery has committed shirk”. Because sorcery is based on acts of pure *shirk*, such as seeking the aid and help of the *shayateen*.
- **General meaning of the hadith:** The Prophet ﷺ warns his *ummah* against a form of sorcery by demonstrating its ruling. Tying knots and blowing into them is one of the common practices of sorcery. When the sorcerer intends to practice *sihr* over others, they tie a number knots in a thread and blow on each knot until the purpose of their sorcery is accomplished. By blowing on these knots and with the assistance of the devils, a sorcerer manages to use supernatural powers over others and harm them according to what Allah has decreed.
- **Relevance of the hadith to the chapter:** The *hadith* clearly shows that tying knots and blowing into them while seeking assistance in the *shayateen* is a form of *sihr*. This form of *sihr* is also referred to as *al-azaa'im*, or the casting of spells.

وَعِنْدَ ابْنِ مَسْعُودٍ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: أَلَا هَلْ أَنْبَيْتُمْ مَا الْعَصَةُ؟ هِيَ التَّمِيمَةُ الْقَالَةُ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ. رواه مسلم.

Ibn Mas'ud is reported to have heard Allah's ﷺ saying: Shall I not tell you what al-'Adh is? It is conveying false rumors for the purpose of causing disputes between people. [Muslim]

- (الْعَصَةُ) – It is an Arabic word which has multiple meanings such as falsehood, sorcery and malicious gossip. In the context of this *hadith*, it is referring to sorcery.
- (التَّمِيمَةُ) – “Malicious gossip”. The evil practice of spreading people's news with the aim of sowing disagreement and causing disputes between them.
- (الْقَالَةُ) – An explanation of what *nameemah* involves. It is frequent talk which is transferred amongst people which causes dissention between them.
- **General meaning of the hadith:** The Prophet ﷺ warns his *ummah* against sowing the seeds of dissent amongst the people by way of malicious gossip. He ﷺ prefaced the *hadith* with a question to draw attention to this important issue and to be more impressive of its prohibition. He ﷺ explained that spreading news amongst people with the intention of mischief and sowing dissention amongst them is a kind of sorcery.
- **Relevance of the hadith to the chapter:** That *nameemah* falls under the linguistic meaning of *sihr* for two reasons:

1. That it is done in secret behind people's backs, just as the real *sihr* is.
2. That it causes separation between people, just as the real *sihr* is.

Although the one who maliciously gossips (*namaam*) has committed a major sin, they are not considered as sorcerers and as such the same rulings cannot be applied to them.

وَلَهُمَا عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا: أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: إِنَّ مِنَ الْبَيَانِ لَسِحْرًا.

Ibn Umar narrates that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: Indeed, some eloquence in speech can constitute sorcery. [Bukahri, Muslim]

- (مِنَ الْبَيَانِ) – “Some eloquence in speech”. Eloquence in speech is from the mercy and blessings of Allah.

﴿خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ ۝ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ ۝﴾

[He] Created man. And taught him eloquence. [al-Rahman: 3-4]

- Eloquence in speech can be divided into two categories:
 1. That which is necessary and is required for communication.
 2. That which captures the minds and changes opinions. This is the one being referred to in the *hadith*,
- (لِسِحْرًا) – “Constitutes sorcery”. Eloquent speech may grasp the hearts of people to the extent that it changes their inclinations and opinions from the truth to falsehood, and vice versa. An ignorant person may easily be influenced by eloquent speech.
- **General meaning of the hadith:** The Prophet ﷺ demonstrates another type of sorcery, namely eloquence in speech which has the ability to greatly affect the audience. As a result, eloquent speech can present falsehood in the form of truth and vice-versa. Hence, the *hadith* condemns this type of sorcery, which blurs the truth and presents it as falsehood.
- **Relevance of the hadith to the chapter:** The *hadith* clearly states that deceptive eloquence is a type of sorcery. This is because the effect it has on people is similar to that of real *sihr*, whereby it changes their perceptions and opinions and separates between people and removes them from the circle of truth to the circle of falsehood.
- **Important issues of the Chapter**
 1. ***al-'Iyafah, al-Tarq and al-Tiyarah are three kinds of al-Jibt (sorcery/magic).*** As per the *hadith* of Qabisah ibn al-Mukhariq.
 2. ***al-'Iyafah, and al-Tarq are explained.*** Their explanation has preceded.
 3. ***Astrology is also a kind of sorcery.*** As per the *hadith* of Ibn Abbas: “Whoever learns a part of astrology has learnt a part of sorcery”.
 4. ***Tying knots and blowing over them is also sorcery.*** As per the *hadith* of Abu Huraira: “Whoever ties a knot and blows on it has committed sorcery”. The prohibition of this evil practice is established in the Quran in Surat al-Falaq.
 5. ***al-Namimah (malicious gossip) is also a form of sorcery.*** As per the *hadith* of Ibn Mas'ud. It is considered as a form of sorcery because they share the same results in that they divide between people.
 6. ***Talking superfluously and eloquently can also sometimes be sorcery.*** As per the *hadith* of Ibn 'Umar. Not all eloquence in speech is considered as sorcery, only that which has the same effect of altering the minds and perceptions of people.